WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A sensor package comprising:

a force sensing element having an element surface; and,

a housing having a housing surface, wherein the housing is arranged to support the force sensing element so that the element surface and the housing surface are substantially coplanar and so that the element surface of the force sensing element directly senses a force without need of an actuator.

2. The sensor package of claim 1 wherein the sensing element has a thickness, wherein the housing includes a well and a shelf, wherein the shelf supports the sensing element within the well, and wherein the shelf has a depth with respect to the thickness of the sensing element such that element surface protrudes above the housing surface.

3. The sensor package of claim 1 wherein the sensing element has a thickness, wherein the housing includes a well and a shelf, wherein the shelf supports the sensing element within the well, and wherein the shelf has a depth with respect to the thickness of the sensing element such that element surface is depressed with respect to the housing surface.

4. The sensor package of claim 1 wherein the sensing element has a thickness, wherein the housing includes a well and a shelf, wherein the shelf supports the sensing element within the well, and wherein the shelf has a depth substantially matching the thickness of the sensing element.

5. The sensor package of claim 4 wherein the housing has a connection pad within the well, wherein the sensing element has a connection pad, and wherein the connection pads of the housing and the sensing element are electrically coupled together when the sensing element is supported by the shelf of the housing.

6. The sensor package of claim 5 wherein a conductive adhesive electrically couples the connection pads of the housing and the sensing element.

7. The sensor package of claim 6 further comprising a membrane covering the surfaces of the housing and the sensing element in order to provide electrical isolation of the sensor package.

8. The sensor package of claim 6 further comprising a membrane covering the surfaces of the housing and the sensing element in order to provide environmental protection for the sensor package.

9. The sensor package of claim 6 wherein the shelf has an adhesive reservoir to hold the conductive adhesive.

10. The sensor package of claim 5 wherein the shelf is arranged to prevent the conductive adhesive from migrating around an edge of the sensing element and causing sensing element edge electrical shorting.

11. The sensor package of claim 1 wherein the housing has a connection pad, wherein the sensing element has a connection pad, and wherein the connection pads of the housing and the sensing element are electrically coupled together when the sensing element is supported by the housing.

12. The sensor package of claim 11 wherein a conductive adhesive electrically couples the connection pads of the housing and the sensing element.

13. The sensor package of claim 12 further comprising a membrane covering the surfaces of the housing and the sensing element in order to provide electrical isolation of the sensor package.

14. The sensor package of claim 12 further comprising a membrane covering the surfaces of the housing and the sensing element in order to provide environmental protection for the sensor package.

15. The sensor package of claim 12 wherein the conductive adhesive is held in an adhesive reservoir of the housing.

16. The sensor package of claim 1 further comprising a membrane covering the surfaces of the housing and the sensing element in order to provide electrical isolation of the sensor package.

17. The sensor package of claim 1 further comprising a membrane covering the surfaces of the housing and the sensing element in order to provide environmental protection for the sensor package.

18. A sensor package comprising:

a force sensing element having an element surface; and,

a housing having a housing surface, a well, and first and second shelves within the well, wherein the first and second shelves of the housing are arranged to support the force sensing element so that the element surface and the housing surface are substantially coplanar and so that the element surface of the force sensing element directly senses a force without need of an actuator.

19. The sensor package of claim 18 wherein the housing has a connection pad within the well, wherein the sensing element has a connection pad, and wherein the connection pads of the housing and the sensing element are electrically coupled together when the sensing element is supported by the first and second shelves of the housing.

20. The sensor package of claim 19 wherein a conductive adhesive electrically couples the connection pads of the housing and the sensing element.

21. The sensor package of claim 20 wherein the first and second shelves are arranged to prevent the conductive adhesive from migrating around an edge of the sensing element and causing sensing element edge electrical shorting.

22. The sensor package of claim 20 wherein the first and second shelves each has an adhesive reservoir to hold the conductive adhesive.

23. The sensor package of claim 16 further comprising a membrane covering the surfaces of the housing and the sensing element in order to provide electrical isolation of the sensor package.

24. The sensor package of claim 16 further comprising a membrane covering the surfaces of the housing and the sensing element in order to provide environmental protection for the sensor package.

25. A method of packaging a force sensing element having an element surface comprising the following steps:

a) applying the force sensing element to a housing having a housing surface so that the element surface and the housing surface are substantially coplanar; and,

b) attaching the force sensing element to the housing.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein the force sensing element has a thickness, wherein the housing includes a well and a shelf, wherein the shelf has a depth substantially matching the thickness of the force sensing element, and wherein step a) comprises the step of applying the force sensing element to the housing so that the shelf supports the force sensing element within the well.

27. The method of claim 25 wherein the housing has a connection pad, wherein the force sensing element has a connection pad, and wherein step b) comprises the step of adhesively binding the connection pads of the housing and the force sensing element together so that the force sensing element is attached to the housing and so that the connection pads of the housing and the force sensing element are electrically coupled together.

28. The method of claim 25 further comprising the step of covering the surfaces of the housing and the force sensing element with a membrane in order to provide electrical isolation of the force sensing element.

29. The method of claim 25 further comprising the step of covering the surfaces of the housing and the sensing element with a membrane in order to provide environmental protection for the force sensing element.